Conditions of La ilaaha illa Allaah

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Every Muslim knows that the key to Paradise is the statement, "There is none worthy of worship except Allaah." Yet too many Muslims simply rely upon this statement and believe that as long as they have made this statement, nothing will harm them. They think they will be granted Paradise because of this mere verbal statement of the Shahadah. There is no question that the mere saying of," I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allaah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger," is not sufficient for salvation. In fact, the hypocrites used to make this statement quite often yet Allaah describes them as liars and says that they shall abide in the lowest abyss of the Hell-fire.

As many scholars state, though, this statement or testimony is the key to Paradise. The famous follower Wahb ibn Munabbih was once asked, " Isn't the statement of la ilaaha illa Allaah the key to Paradise?" He answered, "Yes, but every key has ridges. If you come with the key that has the right ridges, the door will open for you. Yet if you do not have the right ridges the door will not open for you." That is, the statement must meet certain conditions. These conditions are what will differentiate the person who will benefit from his making of that statement from the one who will not benefit from that statement, no matter how many times a day he may have made that statement.

Before discussing the conditions of the Shahadah, there is one more point that I feel compelled to make. That is, some people have a tendency to take one Hadith or one verse and then based on that one text, they will make some conclusion that, for example, whoever simply says," There is no God except Allaah," will enter Paradise. But, actually, we should all realise that all of the Qur'aan and Hadith complement each other and explain one another. To find the correct position on any one question, one must bring together all of the related verses and Hadith and see what the true Islaamic position is of that question. The same is true for the conditions of the shahadah.

If we study the verses of the Qur'aan and the Hadith of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, we will find that the conditions of the shahadah are seven, eight or nine in number depending on how we look at them. It is important that all of us make sure that we are meeting these conditions in our own lives and in our own testimony of faith. We must do our best to satisfy these conditions before it is too late and our testimony will be of no avail whatsoever. It is not simply for the sake of teaching these conditions, indeed there is no benefit to that. But it is, instead, for all of us to look to ourselves and to make sure that we are actually meeting these conditions so that, by Allaah's mercy, the doors to Paradise will be open for us by our key of la ilaaha illa Allaah.

The FIRST of these condition is KNOWLEDGE. That is, one must have the basic and general knowledge of what is meant by the shahadah. One must understand what the shahadah is affirming and what the shahadah is denying. Allaah says in the Qur'aan,

> **"So know that there is no God save Allaah, and ask forgiveness for your sin"** (Muhammad : 19).

Similarly, the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said, *"Whoever dies knowing that there*

is no one worthy of worship except Allaah shall enter Paradise." (Recorded by Muslim). In fact, the shahadah itself is a testimony. When one testifies to something, one must know what it is that he is testifying concerns. Obviously, a testimony about something that one does not have any knowledge about is absolutely unacceptable. Allaah says in the Qur'aan,

> **"Save him who bears witness unto the truth knowingly"** (al-Zukhruf : 86).

Now this condition probably sounds obvious; if someone said to you, "There is no God except Allaah," and then said that what he meant by Allaah was Jesus, you would immediately tell him that this shahadah is nonsense. Yet can you imagine that there is a Muslim country in the world that until recently used to have a yearly week-long celebration to "the Gods of the Sea"! All along they call themselves Muslims and they make the shahadah numerous times a day. This clearly shows that they have no idea what the meaning of their shahadah is. Do you think that this kind of shahadah will open the doors to Paradise for them? Today, there are many Muslims who wonder why we should not accept secularism. They think that there is nothing wrong with secularism! Many of these Muslims pray five times a day and utter the shahadah repeatedly. Yet they see nothing wrong with accepting a Lawgiver other than Allaah? What kind of shahadah are these people making?

All of us do our best to learn at least the basics of Islaamic beliefs, the basics of what shahadah means. In this way, Allaah willing, we will be making the correct shahadah. We will be witnessing to the truth as we are supposed to be witnesses to it.

The SECOND condition of the shahadah is CERTAINTY (or al-yaqeen). This is the opposite of doubt and uncertainty. In Islaam, in fact, any kind of doubt is equivalent to Kufr or disbelief. We must, in our hearts, be absolutely certain of the truth of the shahadah. Our hearts must not be wavering in any way when we testify to the truth of, "There is none worthy of worship except Allaah." Allaah describes the believers in the Qur'aan as those who have belief in Allaah and then their hearts waver not. Allaah says,

> **"... the (true) believers are those only who believe in Allaah and His messenger and afterward doubt not, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allaah. Such are the sincere"** (al-Hujuraat : 15).

Similarly, the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said, *"No one meets Allaah with the testimony that there is none worthy of worship but Allaah and I am the Messenger of Allaah, and he has no doubt about hat statement, except that he will enter Paradise."* (Recorded by Muslim.) Indeed, Allaah describes the hypocrites as those people whose hearts are wavering. For example, Allaah says,

> **"They alone seek leave of thee (not to participate in jihaad) who believe not in Allaah and the Last Day and whose hearts feel doubt, so in their doubt they waver"** (al-Tauba : 45).

Many scholars have stated that the diseases of the heart, or the doubt and suspicions that one allows into one's heart, are more dangerous for a person's faith than lusts and desires. This is because lusts and desires may be satisfied at some time yet the person still knows them to be wrong and he may control himself and repent and give up that evil deed. On the other hand, the doubts and suspicions may linger in the heart, with no cure, until the person finally leaves Islaam entirely or continues to practice Islaam while, in fact, in his heart he does not have the true faith. The greatest cure for these doubts is seeking

knowledge. It is through sound knowledge of the Qur'aan and the sunnah that most of these doubts will be removed. By study and understanding, one will attain certainty. And as one studies and learns more, his certainty will be made firmer and firmer. I will give you just one example on this point; this is related to all of the doubts, suspicions and misconceptions that are circulating about the authenticity of the Hadith literature. For example, some Muslims even claim that Hadith were not recorded until at least 200 years after the death of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam. Indeed, there are Muslims who seem to have a great deal of doubt about Hadith and very quick to reject Hadith on that basis. But, in fact, if one actually takes the time to study the history and preservation of Hadith, one will immediately recognise that all those claims and charges against the Hadith are not based on anything scientific whatsoever. They are nothing but false claims that come from Satan and which Muslims with poor understanding and knowledge have allowed to creep into their hearts. Let me make one last point about this condition of certainty. As I alluded to earlier, doubts and misconceptions are very dangerous for a person's faith. Doubt and wavering are tantamount to apostasy in Islaam, as I mentioned earlier. Hence, every Muslim should do best to safeguard himself from such doubts and remain away from the sources of doubts- especially if they are not well grounded in the Islaamic sciences and do not have the knowledge to refute such doubts and misconceptions. Hence if a person has an associate or friend, even if he be a Muslim friend, who is always making him doubt Allaah or the religion, then he should remain away from that person in order to safeguard his own religion. Many Muslims nowadays study courses on Islaam taught by Orientalists and because of their weak backgrounds in Islaamic studies, they are influenced by the nonsense that some of these Orientalists are teaching in the name of "science". Similarly, many brothers and sisters nowadays are spending hours at a time with the computer news groups and bulletin boards. A lot of nonsense and falsehood are posted on those news groups and bulletin boards. Again, the one who is not very knowledgeable of his religion may easily be influenced and affected by the misconceptions and false arguments that he reads in those bulletin boards. He should remain away from those things and get a deeper knowledge of Islaam through the authentic sources of the religion. Again, the greatest counterforce that can defeat doubts and misconceptions, after the bounty and guidance of Allaah, is sound knowledge and understanding of the religion. When a person has that, he will not be affected by the weak arguments put out by the enemies of Islaam and he will be, Allaah willing, from among those described in the Qur'aan,

> **"It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allaah"** (Faatir : 28)

The THIRD condition of the shahadah is ACCEPTANCE (or al-qabool). If a person has knowledge of and certainty in the shahadah, this must followed by acceptance, with the tongue and heart, of whatever that shahadah implies. Whoever refuses to accept the shahadah and its implications, even if he knows that it is true and certain about its truth, than he is a disbeliever. This refusal to accept is sometimes due to pride, envy or other reasons. In any case, the shahadah is not a true shahadah without its unconditional acceptance. The scholars all talk about this condition as a general condition in the way that I have just stated. However, there is also a more detailed aspect that we must all be aware of. The believer accepts whatever the implications of the shahadah are. This also means that he believes in whatever is stated in the Qur'aan or stated by the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, without any right to choose what he wants to believe and what he wants to reject. Allaah says in the Qur'aan,

> **"Do you believe in part of the book and reject part of it? And what is the reward of those who do so save ignominy in the life of the world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be consigned to the most**

grievous doom" (al-Baqara : 85).

This is one aspect that the Muslims must be aware of. Although it is not the same as the complete refusal to accept the truth, by rejecting part of the truth that has come from Allaah, one also negates his testimony of faith. Unfortunately, many Muslims are doing this nowadays in various ways. Although not all of these forms may necessarily be considered apostasy, they are still very dangerous. For example, if they do not like what is stated in a verse in the Qur'aan, they simply reinterpret the verse according to their liking. If they do not like what is stated in a Hadith, they simply state that the Hadith must not be authentic although they are not scholars in that area. This kind of behaviour is the antithesis of the behaviour of the true Muslims. Whatever comes from Allaah and His Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, the true Muslim believes in as the truth. This goes hand in hand with their testimony of faith.

The FOURTH condition of the shahadah is SUBMISSION and COMPLIANCE (or al-inqiyad). This implies the actual physical enactment with our deeds of our shahadah. In fact, this is one of the main meanings of the word Islaam itself, "the submission to the will and commands of Allaah." This is what Allaah commands in the Qur'aan,

> **"Turn unto Him repentant, and surrender unto Him"** (al-Zumar : 54).

Allaah has praised those who submit to His command by their actions. Allaah says,

> **"Who is better in religion than he who surrenders his purpose to Allaah while doing good"** (al-Nisa : 125).

Actually, Allaah has clearly made it a condition of faith that one submits to the command of Allaah and His messenger. Allaah says,

> **"But nay, by your Lord, they will not truly believe until they make you [the Messenger of Allaah] judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of which you decide, and submit with full submission"** (al-Nisa : 65)

Unfortunately, there are many who claim that there is no relationship between faith and deeds. You can even hear one Muslim saying about another, "That is the best Muslim I have ever met," yet the other person performs scarcely any of the deeds of Islaam whatsoever. This incorrect understanding of faith has spread throughout the Muslim world. Indeed, our shahadah or testimony of faith must be implemented or realised in our hearts, tongues and actions. In our hearts, we must have love for Allaah, fear Allaah and hope in Him. With our tongues we must testify to the shahadah. And with our actions, we must implement what the testimony of faith requires from us. Anyone who claims to be a Muslim and yet does no deeds, either does not understand Islaam whatsoever or is bearing testimony against himself that his testimony of faith is not a true and correct testimony of faith. This does not mean that the true believer never commits a sin. Indeed, true believers do commit sins, but as long as they recognise that what they did is not correct and it is inconsistent with their obligation of submitting to Allaah, then they have not violated the soundness of their testimony or shahadah. But do not forget, they are still sinners. And what is the minimum of submission that is required from a person beyond which there can be no claim to faith? For those scholars who say that the abandonment of prayers is infidelity, it is the five daily prayers. Whoever does not perform, at least, the five daily prayers has gone beyond the limit that is acceptable for lack of deeds. Allaah knows best.

The FIFTH condition is TRUTHFULNESS (or as-sidq), as opposed to hypocrisy and dishonesty. This means that when we say the shahadah, we are saying it honestly. We actually mean it. We are not lying when it comes to our testimony of faith. The Prophet (peace be upon his) said, *"No one bears testimony to there being no one worth of worship save Allaah, sincerely from his heart, except that Allaah makes the Hell-fire forbidden for him."* (Recorded by al-Bukharee and Muslim.) We are all familiar with those who say the testimony of faith yet they are not saying it honestly. They do not believe in it but they are simply saying it in order to protect themselves or to get some gain from doing so; these are the hypocrites. Allaah has described them in the opening of the Qur'aan with the following words,

> **"And of mankind are some who say, 'We believe in Allaah and the Last Day,' when they believe not. They think to beguile Allaah and those who believe, and they beguile none save themselves, but they perceive not. In their hearts is a disease, and Allaah increases their disease. A painful doom is theirs because they lie"** (al-Baqara 8-10).

Obviously, the shahadah of those who become Muslims simply to benefit from being Muslim and not because they believe in Islaam will be rejected by Allaah in the Hereafter. They will face a painful punishment due to their lying.

The SIXTH condition is SINCERITY (or al-ikhlaas). That is, when we make the shahadah, we must do so solely for the sake of Allaah. We must not do it for any other reason. And we must not do it for anyone else's sake. In this manner, the meaning of sincerity is opposite of Shirk or ascribing partners with Allaah. We became and remain Muslims solely for Allaah's sake. Allaah says in the Qur'aan,

> **"Worship Allaah, making religion pure for him"** (al-Zumar : 2). And Allaah also says,
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> **"And they are ordained not else than to serve Allaah, keeping religion pure for Him, as men by nature upright and to establish worship and to pay the poor-due. That is true religion"** (al-Bayyinah : 5).

And the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam added, *"Allaah has forbidden for the Hell-fire anyone who says, 'There is no one worthy of worship except Allaah,' and say so desiring the face [and pleasure] of Allaah."* (Recorded by Muslim). This is something that we should all think about, especially those of us who grew up in Muslim families and were born Muslim. We should make it very clear to ourselves that we are Muslims only for the sake of Allaah. We are not Muslims for the sake of our parents, friends, family or community. It must be clear in our minds that we are Muslims for the sake of Allaah first, last and only. One of the signs that we are Muslims for the sake of Allaah is that we do whatever Allaah asks of us, regardless of what anybody else desires or wants from us. That is, in the same way that we are Muslims solely for the sake of Allaah, all of our actions are done for the sake of Allaah. However, sometimes one begins to wonder whether this condition is met by some people. Some people from the Muslim world practice Islaam to the extent that it is pleasing to their families. If there is anything in Islaam that their families do not like-although their families are Muslim and therefore they actually should like all of Islaam- then they do not practice that aspect of Islaam. One common example of that nature is mixing between men and women. Sometimes a brother, here in the U.S., will not mix with women and his wife will remain separate from the men. Yet, when they return to their homes, because this is not pleasing to their families who want to mix between men and women, they easily, simply and

happily compromise their religion for the sake of their parents. These people must sincerely ask themselves why they are Muslims. Are they Muslims for the sake of their parents and therefore whatever their parents like they will do and whatever their parents do not like they won't do? Or are they Muslims for the sake of Allaah and therefore whatever Allaah dislikes they will not do and whatever Allaah is pleased with what they do?

The SEVENTH condition is LOVE (or al-mahabbah). That is, the believer loves this shahadah, he loves in accordance with the shahadah, he loves the implications and requirements of the shahadah and he loves those who act and strive for the sake of this shahadah. This is a necessary condition of the shahadah. If a person makes the shahadah but does not love the shahadah and what it stands for, then, in fact, his faith is not complete. It is not the faith of a true believer. And if he loves something more that this shahadah or if he loves something more than Allaah, then he has negated his shahadah. The true believer, the one meeting the conditions of the shahadah puts no one whatsoever as an equal to Allaah in his love. Allaah says in the Qur'aan,

> **"Yet of mankind are some who take unto themselves (objects of worship which they set as) rivals to Allaah, loving them with a love like (that which is due to) Allaah only. However, those who believe are stauncher in their love of Allaah"** (al-Baqara : 165).

And elsewhere Allaah says,

> **"Say: If your fathers, or your sons, or your brethren, or your wives, or your tribe, or the wealth you have acquired, or merchandise for which you fear that there will be no sale, or dwellings you desire are dearer to you than Allaah and His Messenger and striving in His way: then wait till Allaah brings His command to pass. Allaah guides not wrongdoing folk"** (al-Tauba : 24).

The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said, *"Whoever has three characteristics has tasted the sweetness of faith. [The first of these] is that he loves Allaah and His Messenger more than he loves anyone else ... "* (Recorded by al-Bukharee and Muslim.). This is one of the most important aspects of Islaam yet, for some reason, it is missing from the lives of many Muslims. They act in Islaam as if Islaam were a chore instead of doing things out of the love of Allaah. When Allaah orders us to do something, like bear witness to the faith, we should realise that that thing is pleasing to Allaah and, therefore, out of our love for Allaah, we should be very pleased to do the acts that are pleasing to Allaah. But, as I said, this feeling is missing from many, many Muslims today.

The EIGHT condition of the shahadah is that the person who makes the shahadah must DENY EVERY OTHER OBJECT OF WORSHIP. Although that is clear in the words of the testimony of faith, it does not seem clear to everyone who makes that testimony. Therefore, I am mentioning it explicitly here. In Surah al-Baqara, Allaah clearly reminds us of this important aspect of the shahadah, the shahadah is not merely an affirmation but it is both and affirmation and a negation. Allaah states,

> **"And he who rejects false deities and believes in Allaah has grasped a firm handhold which will never break"** (al-Baqara : 256).

Perhaps the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam made this point even clearer when he said, *"Whoever says there is no one worthy of worship except Allaah and denies whatever is worshipped besides Allaah, then his wealth and blood are protected and his accounting*

will be with Allaah." (Recorded by Muslim). Although this condition should be obvious to everyone who says the words of shahadah, you can still find Muslims who say the shahadah and then make acts of worship for beings or things other than Allaah. You will find them going to the graveyards and worshipping those in the graves. They will perform acts of worship, not for the sake of Allaah, but for the sake of the dead "saints" in the grave. What kind of shahadah have these people made? Do you really think that their shahadah will mean anything on the Day of Judgement as long as they believe that acts of worship may be done for other than Allaah?

The NINTH condition of the shahadah is that the Muslim ADHERES to the shahadah until he dies. This is must if the shahadah is to mean anything for you in the Hereafter. You cannot rest on your laurels of what you may have done in the past. No, indeed, the shahadah must be your banner until your death. The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said, *"A man spends a long time doing the deeds of the people of Paradise and then he ends his deeds with the deeds of the people of the Hell-fire. And a man spends a long time doing the deeds of the people of the Hell-fire and then he ends his deeds with the deeds of the people of Paradise."* (Recorded by Muslim) In another Hadith, the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said, *"By the One whom there is no other God, one of you does the actions of Paradise until there is just a handspan between him and Paradise and then the book [preordainment] overtakes him and he does the actions of the people of Hell and he enters into it"* (Recorded by al-Bukharee and Muslim.) And Allaah says in the Qur'aan,

> **"O believers, observe your duty to Allaah with right observance, and die not save as Muslims [surrendering yourselves to Allaah]"** (al-Imran : 102).

Dear brothers and sisters, these are the conditions of the shahadah. These are the aspects of the shahadah that each and every one of us should look to in ourselves and ask ourselves, "Is my shahadah meeting those requirements? Am I saying it sincerely, honestly and out of love for Allaah? Am I saying it based on what it really means? Am I denying all other false objects of worship?..." These questions we should ask ourselves now before we meet Allaah. Allaah willing, we shall ask ourselves these questions now and we shall find that we have all the right answers for them. Or, if we find we have some deficiency, we shall work to remove that deficiency. Such that, by Allaah's mercy, in the Hereafter, our shahadah will be the key to Paradise for us and the gates of Paradise will swing wide open for us and we will be able to live forever in the bounties of Paradise, with Allaah being pleased with us.

Again, it is not simply a matter of knowing these conditions. Indeed, one can meet many Muslims who have these conditions memorised, yet when one looks to their deeds and behaviour, one can see that these conditions have no effect on them. This means, in fact, no matter how well he knows and can rattle off these conditions, he, in fact, is not fulfilling them. In the Hereafter, his knowledge of these conditions will be of no avail to him. Indeed, his knowledge will be a proof against him as he clearly knows what the conditions are that he must satisfy yet he has shown that he is not willing to satisfy them in his life.